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Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

BY
Julius M. Minyori, Maj, Kenya Air Force

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Advisor:
Marc Flores, Maj, USAF

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Significance of the Problem	7
Implications of AFRICOM Establishment	8
Engaging With Africa	10
AFRICOM's Responsibilities	13
AFRICOM's Current Activities in Africa	15
ASF Role in Africa	16
Opportunities for ASF	19
Funding ASF	19
Logistics and Readiness	20
Recommendations	21
Conclusions	21

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

Abstract

Since the announcement of USAFRICOM in 2007 and its eventual establishment in 2008, a lot has been said about its intentions and designs in Africa. However, the US government and African Command (AFRICOM) commander have repeatedly stated that AFRICOM's sole purpose is to capacitate African governments to respond to crises within the continent. Herein is the possibility of competition that AFRICOM poses to African Standby Force (ASF), because ASF was established for the same purpose. The view within Africa is that African problems should be solved by Africans, but African countries do not have the capacity to effectively deal with emerging security problems which have the potential to impact the global political economy. The establishment of USAFRICOM promises to bridge the capacity gap and provide African countries with some of the lacking capacity. However African leaders are resisting the establishment due to a myriad of reasons. This paper reviews this relationship and finds that cooperation is better than competition when it comes to issues of security in Africa.

Introduction

The African Standby Force (ASF) was established by the AU in 2003, so that it could provide a mechanism through which Africa could respond fast to deteriorating security situations in the continent¹. The ASF was created well before the announcement of USAFRICOM in 2007. The two organizations have similar mission statements and the challenge is therefore to define the roles each should play and thus avoid unnecessary competition. Despite the seeming competition, USAFRICOM has the requisite capabilities to compliment the ASF in its delivery of services in Africa. This paper will argue that USAFRICOM can play a decisive role to compliment the efforts of ASF in ensuring security and stability in Africa and should not be seen as a competitor, but a complimentary force. It will also analyze the consequences of competition and highlight the benefits of collaboration where AFRICOM can complement the efforts of ASF for mutual advantage. The objective is to find ways in which AFRICOM can use the already existing African wide military infrastructure to entrench its presence in the continent. Once AFRICOM is fully established on the continent, it will serve to demystify Africa to Americans, America to Africans, as well as secure American interests in the continent.

Most Americans view Africa as a continent plagued by instability, poverty, disease and poor governance. While this may be true to an extent it does not however capture the entire picture across the continent. Moreover, the predominant view fails to capture the growing importance Africa has for the US national security and economic interests. American interests in Africa range from development and humanitarian problems to challenges posed by the advent of globalization and the opportunities for terrorists and other violent actors to exploit unstable and ungoverned spaces.² The National Security Strategy (NSS) articulates the need for the US to expand access to energy resources, prevent the spread of terrorism in weak or collapsing states,

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

and address health and environmental issues internationally.³ To achieve these objectives, the US needed to have a military presence in the continent; this was achieved by having a unified command solely responsible for Africa. Although Africa was initially ignored by the US during the cold war; its current importance in terms of the national security strategy objectives cannot be gainsaid.

While announcing the intended formation of USAFRICOM in February 2007, former president George Bush stated that “[t]he Africa command will enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.”⁴ This announcement heralded a new era in US – Africa relations. However, the announcement met with a lot of rhetoric, most of it resisting the formation and rejecting the idea of having it headquartered on the continent. The strident objections have many observers wondering why a seemingly noble idea with security and economic benefits should meet such rejection. The acceptance or rejection of AFRICOM is at the core of its ability to function effectively in Africa.

Since the US formed AFRICOM to pursue and safeguard its interests within the African continent, ways of engaging positively with Africans need to be identified and pursued. AFRICOM however stands the risk of approaching African issues from an American perspective which can result in failure of its mission, as there will be no indigenous goodwill to facilitate success. AFRICOM needs to approach African issues from a continent wide dimension to avoid being seen as a partisan organization and thus risk being rejected at the African Union (AU) level of diplomatic engagement. One of the AU organizations that AFRICOM can use to establish its presence in Africa is the African Standby Force (ASF).

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

The ASF has the mission of responding to crises in the continent and comprises both military and civilian branches which work together to address peace and security issues.⁵ Thus the ASF mission is similar to that of AFRICOM albeit with a few modifications. The similarity in missions already provides a point of contact, which should be explored further. Where ASF declared mission is in support of AFRICOM mission, AFRICOM should take the lead in capacitating the ASF in such a way that Africans feel that they retain the ownership of the process. This is possible if AFRICOM is willing to leverage the existing USG capacity in the continent.

The US has several security programs already running in Africa, but this is the first time it has proposed to locate a fully manned military headquarter on the continent. The organizations running these programs already have dealings with the ASF.⁶ These programs therefore have the potential to be subsumed by the military and further create a point of contact to enhance the relationship between AFRICOM and ASF. The collaboration between AFRICOM and ASF, though initially proposed to operate at the Military to Military level of relations can be tailored to encompass other instruments of power and thus bring Africa under the observation of the US thereby making it easier for the US to secure its interests within the continent.

Significance of the Problem

The announcement of a unified command for Africa in February 2007 heralded a new era in US – Africa security relations.⁷ Africa had hitherto been carved between three commands; EUCOM, CENTCOM, and PACOM. The establishment of AFRICOM amalgamated these commands into one. This indicated the importance to which the US regards security and stability in Africa. In 2008 AFRICOM became fully operational with one of its stated objectives being “to work with African states and regional organizations to help strengthen regional stability and

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

security through improved security and military professionalization. [and] If directed by national command authorities, its military operations would aim to deter aggression and respond to crises.”⁸ Therein is the contradiction between AFRICOM and the African Standby Force (ASF). ASF has the mandate of responding to crises within Africa; a role that AFRICOM has also taken on. Due to the conflict between the stated missions of the two organizations, the problem of competition is real. However, the disparity in resources, intentions and capabilities leads one to question whether it is wise to compete; or whether collaboration is the better option.

Implications of AFRICOM Establishment

The establishment of USAFRICOM in 2007 was the culmination of a long process of evaluating the need for a unified command for Africa⁹. Initially, under combatant command arrangement, security concerns and challenges in Africa were under three separate combatant commands responsible for parts of the region, with the primary focus not on the African continent¹⁰. Central Command (CENTCOM) had responsibility for Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan. Pacific Command (PACOM) had responsibility for the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles. The rest of the continent was the responsibility of European Command (EUCOM). As articulated in the NSS, the need to expand and ensure America's access to energy resources, prevent the spread of terrorism in weak or broken states, and address transnational health and environmental concerns has transformed Africa from a strategic backwater, into a priority region for U.S. economic, political, and military interests¹¹. The establishment of AFRICOM will help U.S. policymakers focus more closely on Africa's problems, support regional efforts to address mutual concerns, and bolster the capacity of African nations to tackle regional problems¹².

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

Africa is subject to political and economic volatility that contributes to border disputes, corruption, famine, internal conflicts, poverty, weak internal security capabilities, porous borders, poor infrastructure, natural disasters, and vulnerability to terrorism¹³. These problems make addressing U.S. security and economic concerns in the region a complex combination of bolstering stability, encouraging political pluralism, enhancing the military capabilities of African peacekeepers, promoting development and economic growth, building institutions, promoting good governance, and addressing short-term natural disasters and other crises¹⁴. This makes it important for the US to have closer monitoring of the African peace situation in order to meet the requirements of the NSS, especially forestalling state collapse, which has the potential for creating ungoverned spaces, many of which can be exploited by terrorist organizations as safe havens and training grounds.

AFRICOM began as a sub-command of EUCOM in October 2007 headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, at the European Command headquarters. It stood up as a separate command in October 2008, but could not be able to acquire headquarters on the African continent. While not all of the commands have regionally based headquarters—for instance, CENTCOM is based in Tampa—AFRICOM should be based in the region because of the unique challenges that it is being asked to meet. This arrangement will improve accessibility to the region and promote cultural and working relationships with regional partners. Moreover, the command will be better positioned to communicate concerns to the political leadership in Washington and provide better advice to policymakers¹⁵. With Africa as its sole priority, the U.S. Africa Command is able to engage at the national, regional, and theater levels, building strategic relationships that encourage development of the security structures which African governments seek across the conflict spectrum.

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

The location of the command headquarters has not yet been announced, although officials have met with numerous African leaders concerning the possibility of hosting. The Department of Defense (DoD) has said that the headquarters will be relatively small, with 80 percent of command staff based outside the region¹⁶. The Pentagon insists that there are no plans to establish new military bases in Africa; Instead, AFRICOM will be represented by the headquarters and "regional integration teams" in offices spread around the continent to align with the African Union's five regional economic communities and the African standby force brigades. The intent is to establish a "regional presence on the African continent which would facilitate appropriate interaction with existing Africa political-military organizations"¹⁷. Herein lie the possibility of impacting security in Africa without being perceived as a resource extraction force. By engaging directly with ASF, AFRICOM can demonstrate the DoD intent stated above and convince the African governments that it was not entirely formed for the purposes of securing African resources, but that it also has African security interests at its foundation.

Engaging With Africa

The USAFRICOM Commander General William 'Kip' Ward acknowledges that Africa is a complex environment requiring a new and different approach¹⁸. Additionally, it is important to note China and India's ongoing efforts in Africa. Over the last ten years, China's interests in Africa have increased significantly. China is the world's leading consumer of copper, steel, cobalt and aluminum, and is second only to the United States as an importer of African oil. India, as of April 2008, pledged to invest \$500 million over the next five years in development projects in Africa, and also pledged to double financial credit to African countries from \$2 billion dollars during the past five years to \$5.4 billion over the next five years. The actions and contributions

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

of both of these nations demonstrate the active role they play in Africa today¹⁹. Moreover these countries do not insist on good governance as the criterion for disbursement of loans and grants.

The DOD Guidance for Employment of the Force specifically directs three strategic end states as guidance for U.S. Africa Command's activities. These are: 1) African countries and organizations are able to provide for their own security and contribute to security on the continent. 2) African governments and regional security establishments have the capability to mitigate the threat from organizations committed to violent extremism. 3) African countries and regional mechanisms/economic communities maintain professional militaries that are responsible to civilian authorities, respect the rule of law, and abide by international human rights norms.²⁰

Thus U.S. Africa Command's primary effort is building African security capacity so that Africa can prevent future conflict and address current or emerging security and stability challenges. This approach reinforces African states' gains in improving governance, and enables the United States to help improve the effectiveness of current African supported UN and AU peacekeeping missions. AFRICOM has also established theater strategic objectives designed to: 1) support the achievement of the theater strategic end states, 2) protect or advance U.S. interests in Africa, and 3) provide focus for the command's engagement activities. The primary mechanism for meeting these objectives is building African security capacity.²¹

According to Gen Ward, "Our mil-to-mil programs assist our allies and partners in maturing their capabilities to conduct operations with well-trained, disciplined forces that respect human rights and the rule of law".²² However these programs have so far focused on specific countries, which make the African elites wary of the motives behind US benevolence. Many have observed that the US is using AFRICOM to re-colonize the continent²³. This view has pervaded the general thinking in the continent and requires being debunked. As Liberia president

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

noted, “AFRICOM should be seen for what it is: recognition of the growing importance of Africa to U.S. national security interests, as well as recognition that long-term African security lies in empowering African partners to develop a healthy security environment through embracing good governance, building security capacity, and developing good civil-military relations.”²⁴

Many of the programs that AFRICOM is currently implementing are carry over from the command’s previous responsibility for portions of U.S. Africa Command’s AOR. AFRICOM needs to synchronize this collection of programs across the five regions of Africa so that, it can be able to implement the coherent approach outlined in U.S. Africa Command’s Theater Strategy²⁵. One good thing is that AFRICOM has defined the regions to coincide with the five regions of Africa which are: North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa. These regions also house the five African Standby Force brigades.

However, more is needed in terms of cultural awareness if AFRICOM is to have the intended impact on the continent and be accepted as vehicle for development instead of being as a purveyor of neocolonialism. Mistakes are still being made at very senior levels. For example, in his presentation to congress on the AFRICOM posture for 2009 General Ward claimed that, “Foreign language skill, cultural awareness, and regional proficiency are core competencies for U.S. Africa Command. The many bilateral and multilateral relationships that U.S. Africa Command maintains as we work with our partners depend on the language skills, advanced cultural awareness, and regional expertise of our forces. Effective interaction with regional partner’s governments, militaries, and populations demands a robust ability to communicate on a face-to-face level. Growing and enhancing these language and cultural capabilities is vital for U.S. Africa Command”.²⁶ This claim is without merit. The majority of AFRICOM personnel

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

employed on ad hoc basis within the African continent are highly deficient in all the aspects where General Ward claims expertise. This attitude of assuming that the US commanders know what is wrong or what Africans need, are at the core of hostility that AFRICOM is facing in Africa despite the good intentions and the concerted effort already expended in ‘selling’ AFRICOM to the African leadership. Perhaps if AFRICOM could secure a headquarters within the continent it might be able to effectively address this issue, and then validate this claim.

AFRICOM’s Responsibilities

After achieving full operational capability in October 2008 as a stand-alone unified command, the commander of AFRICOM started reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense, like all other unified commanders in the Department of Defense.²⁷ In the Pentagon’s eyes and command structures, this effectively put Africa on par with the Pacific Rim, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America.²⁸ However, the problems posed by Africa were and still remain unique, requiring a novel approach hitherto unpracticed in any existing commands.

Of primary concern are challenges posed by ‘ungoverned spaces’, defined as physical or non-physical area(s) where there is an absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control. And this could arise or result from a variety of causes including poor governance, external aggression, competing claims, internal revolt and related factors. If left unattended or unaddressed, failed states, humanitarian disasters and ungoverned areas could become safe havens for terrorists. In the final analysis, the pressing question is: where does this leave AFRICOM? Malan’s²⁹ suggestion is that beyond military counter-terrorism, AFRICOM should focus on two primary and unashamed military support roles, –Firstly, defense sector reform, including civil-military relations; and secondly, support to building African peacekeeping and

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

standby capacity. This implies a role in building more professional armed forces, and entrenching the democratic principle of civil supremacy over the military. Furthermore, this implies a demonstrable commitment by AFRICOM to provide long-term, sustainable support to developing African peacekeeping capabilities – including participation in UN peacekeeping, as well as AU and regional peacekeeping. Malan argues that “These roles are indeed envisioned by the DoD but they are not writ at this point,”³⁰ From the US side, not too much has been said about peacekeeping in Africa, but it is acknowledged that “[d]espite a willingness to participate in these (peacekeeping) operations, many African militaries lack the command and control, training, equipment, and logistics capability to effectively participate in such efforts”. Clearly, the US has recognized the need to enhance peacekeeping capabilities on the African continent.³¹ This could indeed be a point of departure for strengthening US-African security cooperation, and to create new opportunities to bolster the capabilities of African role players.

Africa’s main security challenge is to mobilize sufficient resources to provide a secure, stable and well governed environment that is underpinned by the rule of law, human rights and civil liberties. Furthermore, there are great expectations that the African Union (AU) will be able to deploy the long-desired ASF rapidly. But recent peacekeeping experience has revealed that the AU suffers from a lack of strategic management capacity, has no effective mechanisms for operational level mission management, has insufficient logistical support and ability to manage logistics, lacks capacity in communication and information systems, and is totally dependent on external partners.³² This said, De Coning³³ rightly argues that the AU and African regional organizations do not have the capacity to undertake complex peacekeeping operations on their own. In this sense, the establishment of AFRICOM may well be promising, in terms of closer cooperation between the US military and African role players. In the meantime, Swart³⁴ is

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

probably correct when he notes that much will depend on whether the US could convince role players on the African continent that there is indeed a genuine interest in ending conflict, insecurity and underdevelopment in Africa, through the provision of sustained assistance to African countries. This implies that AFRICOM should be more than a project where only the US stands to gain in the long term.

AFRICOM's Current Activities in Africa

Upon confirmation, General Ward visited the Africa Union HQs and stated, “We want to work with the African Union, and we want to work with the regional offices that are working to develop the standby forces in particular. But only as our African partners want. When they want to invite us and have us work and plan with them, we want to be there and work with them.”³⁵ This clearly demonstrated the intent of AFRICOM to fully engage with ASF. It also indicated that AFRICOM understands the need to approach security issues in Africa through the AU peace and security architecture. However, despite the stated intentions, AFRICOM has not yet fully engaged with the AU. Instead, it has chosen to approach security assistance through engagement with individual countries militaries. For example in 2008, AFRICOM trained a light infantry battalion for the DRC.³⁶ The implications for this piecemeal approach is a strengthening of ASF rationale while at the same time weakening the political dialogue between African states, since the potential for security dilemma is increased because weak states that feel threatened by neighbors who benefit from AFRICOM's assistance not only seek to increase their own capacities, but also see AFRICOM as a potential adversary.³⁷

AFRICOM is currently involved in several programs. It has already taken over international Military Education and Training (IMET) for African countries receiving military

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

training in the US as well as Foreign Military Sales (FMS).³⁸ AFRICOM is also involved in peacekeeping training within the African continent through offering expertise either directly or in association with other USG agencies involved in security capacity building.³⁹ AFRICOM's engagement with ASF in peacekeeping training has however remained at the minimum as it cannot do so directly without a presidential directive that authorizes to partner with regional organizations. Thus when AFRICOM does engage with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs), it will always do so at the bilateral level. Some regions have however managed to have presidential directives and this makes it easier for AFRICOM to impact African security through ASF. Although it is not possible to offer these programs to ASF as an entity, the personnel who receive training offered through these programs have the potential to influence the African perception of AFRICOM and even facilitate its mission success. ASF on the other hand needs to seek out AFRICOM and explain its position in terms of capabilities, limitations and dependencies.

ASF Role in Africa

In January 2004, African ministers of defense and security, meeting at the African Union (AU) headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, adopted the "Draft Framework for a Common African Defense and Security Policy."⁴⁰ The ministers reviewed progress made in developing an African standby peacekeeping force and an early warning system to detect and prevent potential conflicts and to ensure rapid humanitarian relief during disasters. In July 2004, the AU Assembly (of heads of state or government), meeting in Addis Ababa, formally adopted the defense and security policy as Africa's "blueprint" in the search for peace, security, and stability on the continent.⁴¹

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

The ASF is composed of multidisciplinary standby contingents, with civilian, police and military components located in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment on appropriate notice. The ASF, a multinational force empowered to intervene in serious conflicts around the troubled continent will deploy under the auspices of the AU to intervene in border wars and internal conflicts and will consist of five regionally based brigades (3,000 to 4,000 troops) and a sixth formation at the AU's headquarters at Addis Ababa for a combined capacity of 15,000 to 20,000 peacekeepers.⁴² According to the ASF policy framework, ASF was expected to reach full implementation by 2010.⁴³ This goal now seems too ambitious and might not be achieved. Clearly, ASF requires more external support, beyond what is available from the AU in order to achieve its stated program of action. Many of the requirements for full implementation remain unmet to date.

Full implementation of the ASF standby brigades implies the development of other capabilities; such as airlift, sealift and ground transportation. These aid in the rapid deployment of units, ASF police and civilian personnel and their equipment to conflict zones and re-supply them. Considerable logistics capabilities are required to sustain the brigades during deployment and in theater. Interoperability, including interoperable communications, is required for the brigades to achieve unity of effort in the field. Intelligence capabilities are a prerequisite for the brigades to operate effectively in any scenario. ASF also requires counter-insurgency capabilities to defeat spoilers.⁴⁴ These are requirements that are lacking within ASF, but which AFRICOM has in abundance and which can be harnessed for the benefit of the entire African peace and security architecture.

Full implementation also has cost implications for the respective ASF brigade members. ASF is funded by the contributions of AU member states, but the regional brigades are the

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

responsibility of the RECs or RMs.⁴⁵ Effective command and control by sub-regional organizations and force commanders over the brigades requires combined training exercises plus sound communications with sub-regional headquarters and the AU Peace and Security Commission. The sub-regional brigades are charged with developing the ability to deploy field level headquarters that take orders from the AU mission planning cell in Addis Ababa. All of these capabilities are presently lacking to one degree or another.⁴⁶

The ASF is a major step toward forming a multinational military force for intervening militarily in serious conflicts around the troubled continent of Africa. African leaders seem to be keen on avoiding a repeat of genocide such as that in Rwanda in 1994, when extremists from the Hutu majority slaughtered an estimated 800,000 minority Tutsi and Hutu moderates in 100 days of mass murder. If plans come to fruition, by the end of 2010 Africa should have a six-brigade, UN-style force ready to police conflicts. The ASF's formation, which is of great significance, embodies Africa's long-desired dream of policing its own trouble spots.⁴⁷

Peacekeeping in Africa also has financial constraints, and peacekeeping endeavors are costly. African peacekeeping is not limited by political will or the availability of troops but, rather, by insufficient funding. Even relatively small and less logistically demanding unarmed military observer missions are costly. The AU and its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), were unable to provide finances from their own budgets.⁴⁸ The AU is in arrears \$40 million from previous budgets and depends on the goodwill of its "lead nations" and the international community for financial support.⁴⁹ Currently the budget for ASF is heavily subsidized by the EU, the UK, Germany and France. The USG is involved but with the legal restrictions placed on AFRICOM, its visibility is rather muted.

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

Opportunities for ASF

The establishment of USAFRICOM presents opportunities that were hitherto unavailable to ASF, which if carefully harnessed could improve ASF operations and mission accomplishment. Collaboration between AFRICOM and ASF can alleviate the problems that currently hinder effectiveness of ASF. The ability to plan, command, direct and support a multinational peacekeeping force has been identified as a key element of rapid deployment capacity. However, in order to meet the set timeframes, the AU must also have the capacity to react quickly on three interdependent aspects of rapid deployment: personnel, logistics readiness, and funding.

Funding ASF

As observed above, ASF is in dire need of funding to support its activities in the continent. The current peacekeeping missions under the control of ASF have suffered chronic lack of finances and it was only when the UN took over the mission in Darfur when real progress began to be made. Although the ASF has the will to provide viable peace solutions to conflict in the continent this has been hampered by lack of financial ability. The ASF receives its financing through the AU, this being a portion of the contribution made by the member states. A second source of funding is from donors, who are currently led by the European Union (EU). This is where AFRICOM can make its entry into supporting the ASF and have a foothold towards achieving the desired end state. AFRICOM has preponderance in funding which it can use to influence the way ASF is organized and conducts business. However AFRICOM should not be expected to fund ASF without demanding accountability in return. Other countries that are involved in Funding ASF have their representatives at various levels of ASF leadership structure and no less should be expected from AFRICOM.⁵⁰ Funding can also be facilitated through training, where the capacity inherent in AFRICOM can be utilized to train a pool of planners

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

capable of commanding multinational peacekeeping forces, which is one area where Africa truly lacks capacity.

Logistics and Readiness

According to the ASF concept of deployment, each region is required to move its brigade to reception, staging and onward Integration (RSOI) position before AU can take over the operation. Due to lack of finances, many African countries have chosen to define the RSOI as the states' port of embarkation, instead of theater RSOI, which would require that each state moves its rapid deployment capability to a central point within theater where ASF can then take command of the forces. This problem is also visible within the ASF itself as often times the troop contributing country is required to meet the full cost of deployment and then expect a refund from the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC).⁵¹ ASF has an acute logistical problem and it will need all the help it can get if it is to succeed in its mission. Within the ASF itself corruption and interstate competition for hegemony, is making it difficult for the various regional secretariats to achieve objectives.⁵² AFRICOM involvement in the planning and execution of programs in ASF can play a role by demonstrating the effects of corruption free management. Besides, AFRICOM has the ability to facilitate fast deployment timelines by providing the required air and sealift capabilities.

ASF needs to mobilize forces rapidly in order to respond to deteriorating situations within Africa. It has identified six scenarios under which it envisages deployment. However ASF has not developed the logistical capabilities necessary for the successful execution of this intent and again relies on the support of external donors. AFRICOM can help in terms of lift capabilities since this serves its own mission well and can further improve perceptions within

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

African militaries, who by the way have great influence in security decision making processes within their countries.

Recommendations

The current situation where the USAFRICOM is only allowed to engage with regional organizations through a presidential directive is a hindrance to AFRICOM's mission achievement as it tends to portray direct AFRICOM - state engagement as an attempt by the US to build up some countries capacity at the expense of the neighboring states. This has led to a security dilemma and therefore should be reviewed to give the AFRICOM commander a free hand to engage with regional organizations when he deems it to be in the interests of the US and Africa.

On the other hand, ASF needs to explain its position more clearly and stop setting unrealistic goals while at the same time competing with AFRICOM. The fact that ASF is already dealing with EU militaries means that it is a penetrated organization which cannot claim purity of African originality and thus it should welcome, indeed seek assistance from AFRICOM. In doing so, it should advise the AU heads of state conference on the viability of AFRICOM instead of acting as if it can genuinely address African security challenges. Finally ASF and AFRICOM should find areas where common interests exist and work towards addressing them for mutual benefits. Continued execution of ASF only or AFRICOM only programs can only engender duplication and is likely to produce competition instead of collaboration.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of AFRICOM has however been hindered by the inability to establish headquarter presence on the continent. Since the announcement of the establishment of AFRICOM in July 2007, and its eventual standing-up in 2008, there has been a lot of differing

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

opinions on the role that a unified command was going to play in Africa⁵³. This controversy has led to African countries refusing to grant AFRICOM a place where it could situate its HQs, notwithstanding the benefits inherent in offering such a facility. The majority of African countries have refused to see AFRICOM for what it really is; a unified command encompassing both military and civil leadership and development programs⁵⁴ – and instead chosen to view it as an attempt by the US to use the military to expropriate African resources⁵⁵. This resource – centric approach needs to be challenged and reviewed in order for the goals envisaged by AFRICOM to come to fruition and thus benefit both the US and Africa. AFRICOM will need to deconstruct the belief in the minds of the African elite that the sole purpose for its creation was so that the US can dominate Africa militarily and thus ‘steal’ African resources. One area that AFRICOM can begin to demonstrate its benign intent is through its dealing with African militaries. This is an area where AFRICOM is already heavily involved and which it has already articulated in its strategic plan for the continent. So, one is apt to ask, what is new in this proposal? The novelty of this idea lies in the approach that is proposed in this paper. So far, AFRICOM has dealt with African militaries on a country by country basis⁵⁶, thereby creating competition between countries for AFRICOM resources. One may wonder what is wrong with this approach, but from a resource poor continent like Africa, this competition is part of what drives the rhetoric about the unsuitability of an American Military foot print on the continent. The leaders of the countries that are benefiting from this arrangement will fight to discourage other countries from offering space to AFRICOM all in the fear that these countries will be more powerful and therefore threaten the status quo. The elites also fear that direct engagement with AFRICOM will unmask their corrupt activities and thus curtail them from leveraging more resources from the US⁵⁷. For this reason, AFRICOM should seek to penetrate Africa through a

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

more subtle organization such as the ASF, because then it will be dealing with a continent wide arrangement and not individual governments. Also, by dealing with ASF, AFRICOM can avoid the ‘sovereignty’ card so often played by African countries whenever they want to do something unpalatable to the rest of the world. Moreover, it is easier to monitor continent wide security programs when dealing with the organization that is mandated to implement intervention activity in Africa.

Although AFRICOM mission states that it will coordinate with existing African governments and regional organizations such as the ASF in order to enable them have greater capacity to provide security and respond to crises⁵⁸, AFRICOM has not yet decisively engaged with ASF. Its focus so far has been on providing capacity to specific countries’ Armed Forces. For example, AFRICOM recently completed the training of a light infantry battalion for Democratic Republic of Congo⁵⁹, indicating that it was willing to get seriously involved in capacity development for African governments in the area of security. When engaging with governments directly, AFRICOM will have to fund programs through government sponsored methods. This opens a door to corruption and easily buries follow up investigations in bureaucratic obfuscation, resulting in inefficiency. To assist Africa through ASF on the other hand removes these bottlenecks as it is possible to ask for accountability or even have a member of AFRICOM being involved in the project implementation. This is already happening with the creation of rapid deployment capability for Kenya. The building of the Kenya rapid Deployment Capability Headquarters was sponsored by the UK and did not involve Kenyan government agencies but was a direct UK government implemented project.

Finally ASF itself stands a better chance of success if it will set realistic goals and seek the assistance of AFRICOM. The current approach pursued by ASF is inadequate and is not

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

responsive enough because the organization lacks the funding the logistical backup that would ensure smooth operations. The inherent lift capabilities in AFRICOM can be of great help to ASF and should in fact be sought aggressively if ASF is to achieve the operational status it has set for itself.

Will the Establishment of USAFRICOM Compliment or Compete with African Standby Force?

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